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## Seamy Side of Leadership: Do You Work For the Boss From Hell? Management Professors Outline Survival Tactics in New Book

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## NEWS RELEASE

### SEAMY SIDE OF LEADERSHIP: DO YOU WORK FOR THE BOSS FROM HELL? MANAGEMENT PROFESSORS OUTLINE SURVIVAL TACTICS IN NEW BOOK

DAYTON, Ohio — Do you work for the boss from hell?

According to a new book based on interviews with employees at hundreds of companies, there are bad bosses and then there are really bad bosses.

"At its core, this book isn't about distant CEOs in the world's biggest firms, but about the kind of bosses that many of us are stuck with right now. Management is a magnet for narcissism," said Dean B. McFarlin, a University of Dayton professor of management and marketing who co-wrote *House of Mirrors: The Untold Truth about Narcissistic Leaders and How to Survive Them* (Kogan Page Ltd., London).

McFarlin and Paul D. Sweeney, professor of management at the University of Central Florida, estimate that 10 to 15 percent of all managers exhibit tendencies of pathological narcissism — a type of self-adoration named for the Greek mythological figure Narcissus, who for refusing to reciprocate a suitor's love was made to fall in love with something that would likewise fail to return his love: his own reflection. Unfortunately, corporate management, which rewards managers for personal achievement and results, tends to attract people like this, according to the authors.

How can you tell a narcissistic boss from your average bad boss? The authors suggest checking for these telltale signs:

- excessive egotism
- verbal abuse and bullying
- reliance on manipulation and exploitation
- impulsive and reckless behavior
- excessive concern with "image"
- inability to recognize a flawed strategy

The book, written in a conversational style, colorfully describes the managerial styles of narcissistic leaders. More importantly, it offers strategies to employees for keeping their own careers on track, even when narcissistic bosses threaten to sabotage them. These include

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documenting behavior, forming alliances with others who can help, building an information network within the company and developing and refining individual career plans.

The professors also help employees distinguish between Cain and Abel — between healthy and unhealthy levels of narcissism. They maintain that many of the best leaders have some narcissistic tendencies and offer Southwest Airlines, Virgin Group and Harley-Davidson as examples of companies with charismatic and powerful leadership.

A race car is a good metaphor for measuring narcissism, McFarlin said. "Speed wins races, but only to a point. Above a certain speed threshold, drivers invariably lose control."

The best way to judge the difference, McFarlin said, is to look at what motivates the leader: Their own image or a greater good. Often, narcissist tendencies are found to be rooted in the leader's childhood and certain negative aspects of parenting. A child who is shown conditional love, for example, may later have a need to establish power and dominance using exploitation, manipulation and ruthlessness, he said. A child whose self-image is prodigiously promoted may end up with a need to pursue grandiose personal fantasies and use exhibitionism and self-aggrandizement to promote their self-perceived brilliance. Either way, they end up with an inflated self-esteem and an inability to see their own imperfections.

In interviews with employees, McFarlin and Sweeney uncovered "bad boss" stories almost too obscene to print. Consider: A unit manager at a marketing company shared the story of a vice president replacing the manager's prepared speech with a list of the VP's accomplishments; the manager began to protest. "But with a snap of his fingers," the manager said, "the guy cut me off, saying, 'Do it — your (expletive deleted) job can be made to disappear like that.'"

These warped leaders are "far more dangerous" than the run-of-the-mill bad boss and must be reined in. They're more prevalent than most people would like to believe and often last longer and go further up the corporate ladder, according to the authors' analysis of existing studies, management trends and their own research.

"Unchecked, narcissistic leaders can suck the motivation out of subordinates and destroy the organizations that they're supposed to serve," McFarlin and Sweeney concluded.

The book is available through major bookstores or online vendors, such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Booksamillion.

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